

Title: **Engaging, Nurturing and Developing Supervisor Communities**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

Consider and develop ways to implement a range of ways of engaging and nurturing supervisor communities, for the benefit of supervisors, postgraduates, learning communities and sustainable research capabilities.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Postgraduate supervision can be a very isolated activity, much like carrying out postgraduate research, and historically it was also relatively unsupported as a professional role. (Brew and Peseta,2004;Clegg , 1997;Delamont Atkinson and Parry , 1998) In these instances, supervisors might well tend to repeat the behaviours they had themselves experienced, rather than develop a repertoire of interactions to suit the staged development of the research, and the learning approaches, behaviours and needs of the students. There is now a growing wealth of literature on the strategies and practices of supervision and supervisor development has become a standard prerequisite for supervision in a large number of universities world-wide (Gurr 2001;Conrad 1994;Kiley and Mullins. 2001;Pearson and Brew 2002; Wisker 2005). This session looks at emerging practices of and literature on communities of practice (Wenger 1998) in postgraduate supervision, and considers the origins and implementation of some of the good practice ideas which grow from and in some cases are underpinned by this literature. We shall focus in on work carried out principally in two UK universities, and in a range of international universities in Australia, Ireland and the Caribbean which are fostering supervisory communities. Their experience and early literature suggests that a range of development and support enables supervisors to share good practice, continue in their own professional development (CPD),and perhaps gain recognition and reward for their work. Some of the issues (Manathunga 2001,2005) addressed by such communities have included independence and responsibility, time to completion, cross cultural supervision, gender, age and other factors affecting supervisor-student interactions .

We will consider among other practices online communities, regular awaydays with a research and practice focus, and engaging supervisors in researching their practices and staying in touch with the research of others (Wisker et al 2006), each of which offers opportunities for valuable exchange, support and professional development , and discuss the usefulness, practicability and contextual differences underpinning possible similar developments in our own institutions..

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 minutes: Introductions - Identify issues and problems

15 minutes: Exploration and discussion of a variety of ways in which supervisor communities have been developed at the University of Brighton, Anglia Ruskin, Trinity Dublin, QUT Brisbane and other HE institutions. Consideration of the ways in which we can establish nurture and foster such communities using the networks and skills of educational development.

2 minutes: Introduction of questions suggested to prompt discussion:

- Do you have a supervisory development programme?
- What issues might supervisors find useful to share with each other?
- Why might developing and finding ways to support communities be useful?
- Can supervisor development be mapped against Professional Standard 3 and if so how and why?

15 minutes: Group discussions.

8 minutes: Plenary summarising main points, followed by conclusion.

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